

Working Meeting Notes

Staff meeting, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

- Speeds: ideally 35 mph, currently 45 mph, feels like 55 mph
- Private drives: reduce conflict points, raise sidewalks. It will be difficult to take away something someone already has and you need to pick your battles to avoid a “war on cars”. Unenforced stop signs aren’t doing any good, compliance is probably extremely low. Crossing are discernable, more distinguished would be the improvement.
- Wilshire and Kirts potential as developing side streets, making Big Beaver a gateway corridor to the access streets (Maple in Birmingham)

Welcome and Introduction, 1:00 pm – 1:15 pm

- Brian Kischnick: Project started with corridor study and Master Plan, Mr. Scapa and Altair vocally brought the issue to our attention and discussed the barriers his employees face working here. Mr. Kiriluk, Chairman of the DDA and Kirco, and I have also discussed and explored what could happen and what we need to do to transform and revolutionize Big Beaver Rd. This symposium is the next step, we need your input and expertise to identify problems and solutions. Also special thanks to MDOT and Jim Schultz who have partnered with us to co-fund the consultant and some improvement projects along Big Beaver and under I-75.
- Introductions: Brian Kischnick (City Manager), Mark de la Vergne (Sam Schwartz Engineering), Dick Carlisle (Carlisle/Wortman, Planning Consultant), Ben Carlisle (Carlisle/Wortman, Planning Consultant) Tom Pozolo (MDOT), Jim Schultz (MDOT), Dane Slater (Mayor), Dave Henderson (Mayor Pro Tem), Pat Cawley (Traffic Improvement Association of Michigan), Tom Perring (Altair), Kelli Baird (Altair), Don Edmunds (Planning Commission Chair), Gary Piotrowicz (RCOC), Dennis Kolar (RCOC), David Evancoe (RCOC), Alan Kiriluk (Kirco, DDA), Ellen Hodorek (City Council), Alex Bellak (City of Troy), Mark Miller (City of Troy), Stephen Dearing (OHM Engineering Advisors, Engineering Consultant), Kurt Bovensiep (City of Troy), Tim Richnak (City of Troy), Bill Huotari (City of Troy), Steve Vandette (City of Troy), Paul Evans (City of Troy), Glenn Lapin (City of Troy), Brent Savidant (City of Troy), Jim Santilli (Traffic Improvement Association of Michigan), Wade Fleming (City Council), Maggie Hughes (City of Troy)
- This is a quality of life and economic development opportunity and this is us beginning to “move the can forward” and seriously address the problem.

Identification of Issues, 1:15 pm – 2:00 pm

- Alan Kiriluk, Kirco/DDA: It is disappointing to see that we are isolated here, we need to connect along and throughout the corridor. Looking at the Big Beaver corridor it is vehicular dominate, in both speed and traffic volume. We need to define the corridor as host to medical innovators/restaurants/hotels/ the I-75 interchange/corporations/ and businesses. We have created a serious barrier with a huge right of way and little on-street development. Why would anyone walk across the street to shop, visit, and do business? There is a new philosophy of people collision: an environment to encourage people to interact with individuals outside their immediate world. We need the experience, training, and ideas to finding solutions and offer everything and anything. I hope we can explore all the options to this major problem. Bottom line: how do you narrow the right-of-way to change a person’s experience to enhance their lifestyle? We need new solutions and we want to be a leader in the nation. What is your experience? What do we need to do? (Right-of-way: significant response to the traffic coming into troy)

- Tom Perring, Altair: Jim Scapa and I met with Brian last year, growing up in NY Mr. Scapa wants to emulate that environment to recruit the talented type of people that like that are seeking out that kind of environment. The youth are flocking to cities that are pedestrian friendly, we are losing these recruits to pedestrian/environmental friendly places. 60% of our people walk across Big Beaver every day. Altair is very multi-cultural with many visitors from around the world, many don't know how to operate here because they do not use cars at home but they walk anyways and it's dangerous – someone may get killed. We hope that solutions for across and up and down are addressed. Are there any mass transit plans?
 - Alan Kiriluk, Kirco/DDA, response: The corridor study has attempted to address some of these issues.
 - City Manager Brian Kischnick response: Everyone gave us ideas on how to improve and we all have an understanding of the problem so we wanted to get together to talk it out.
 - Brent Savidant, City of Troy, response: (Discussing Big Beaver corridor study and what the impacts this change in policy has had on the road.) Our vision is to populate the street with businesses, restaurants, and shopping. Our pedestrian problem will only be exasperated if we don't address it now and improve the business and individual relationship with the road.
- Mayor Dane Slater: My vision includes the potential of moving people east and west as well, so this is small part of the bigger picture. Eventually, I hope we connect people to Livernois, the Transit Center, Somerset, Maple, etc. and tie together all these dots (the triangle). We need to utilize the transit center as the multi-modal hub. We also must connect the hospitality community and get the private and public sectors working together. Taxis, buses, or trolleys are all solutions to explore if we can coordinate everyone together. We have transportation, but we're not organized as one. We're taking the lead now that the transit center is open as a catalyst for the entire area.

Taxis in Troy: we make it difficult to operate here, we have to solve that problem, and we are our own worst enemy. Spending a lot of money on Big Beaver for cars but we don't have a plan to get pedestrians under I-75, which is disappointing. It's always about movement of cars.

 - Alan Kiriluk, Kirco/DDA, response: We need to narrow and shorten the corridor, our big goal is to connect as well. Enhance with surrounding community (Birmingham) and take advantage of the opportunities, making it a two-way street for business. Economic enhancement to make the region and make Troy more attractive. How do cars and pedestrian co-exist?
 - Jim Schultz, MDOT, response: Shuttles to Birmingham, shuttles with SMART and airport shuttles but there is a gap in funding making some of these solutions probably more long-term. East Lansing and Ann Arbor have some options and models we could emulate in this region.
- Mark de la Vergne, Sam Schwartz Engineering: I am staying at the Marriott but there was no transportation from Detroit Metro to Troy (at a one click, easy solution) but there has to be a demand for that. As a consultant that travels, I would like to explore here but if I didn't have a car I would not be able to.
- Kelli Baird, Altair: When I started working here I didn't even know people lived in Troy, when I coordinate people to come to our headquarters I don't encourage them to stay in Troy or go out in Troy because they are stuck in one place and it is difficult to navigate. I send them to Detroit,

Royal Oak, Birmingham, etc. What's the solution? Uber? Light rail? I don't know, but there has to be a better answer to our system.

- Mayor Pro Tem Dave Henderson response: Royal Oak, Rochester, Birmingham are condensed sections (5 blocks) where our sections are miles long. We need to look at this in small segments and take the approach differently.
- Councilwoman Ellen Hodorek response: Length and span could be our unique opportunity, could be the big money maker. What we have could be bigger and better if we are able to connect to surrounding regions – we need to think big
- Councilman Wade Fleming response: We have an option for a trolley, we have the road and the people and destinations to easily get on and off. We just need to guarantee that it is predictable and reliable. We need to take advantage of the large distance and span. People are already here, if we want to get cars off the road during peak hours and keep them here in the evenings this is the solutions I see. Technology is our asset here.
- Dennis Kolar, RCOC: How do we mesh more cars coming in with this idea? Safety is what we're all about and we are here to help out, comment, and hear solutions.
- Dick Carlisle, Carlisle/Wortman: Funding. We have only experienced a fraction of the private industry contribution available on Big Beaver Road. There are opportunities to redevelop through partnerships and by creating demand. There are certain improvements already put in by the private sector through code changes. Sources of funding range from public to private, to private sponsorship or contribution, to leveraging changes. Without it, nothing will change.
 - Alan Kiriluk, Kirco/DDA, response: The vision must be first, then we can the plan, then develop the project before you can identify funding. This will ease the process for movement.
- Mark de la Vergne, Sam Schwartz Engineering: City Manager Brian Kischnick brings up a good point, we want a park and leave mentality. Reduce traffic throughout the day and change demand. Create the culture first, then manage that demand.

Walking Tour, 2:00 pm – 2:30 pm

- Two groups traveled from City Hall over to and under the I-75 overpass. The condition of the sidewalk, the concrete crossing island, and unsafe entrance/exit ramp crossings were all noted. The groups then continued down to the new restaurant/shopping development on Big Beaver. The private/public space, artwork, and strong relationship to Big Beaver are all direct results of the changes to the form-based code. Finally, in front of City Hall, the groups experienced the very real dangers pedestrians take on when they do not have a pedestrian crossing but choose to try and cross Big Beaver.

Discussion of Application and Strategies, 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

- Mark de la Vergne Presentation (attached). What does a real multi-modal quarter look like? Big Beaver will be a leader on the national stage making the opportunities endless. Think Big. Act Quick.
- Stephen Dearing, OHM Engineering Advisors: You're right, nowhere is like this. This is a good problem to have, you've been able to dig yourself out of the recession to face the problem. Thinking big is good, but acting quick should only be small modest steps. Big thoughts mean big price tags and I don't think the funding is there, private or public and the tax base isn't really there to help. Small things over the long-term will allow for continued development/redevelopment.

For the I-75 underpass, you could explore cutting back the slope concrete to widen side walk as a low cost solution. On mid-block crossings, with a boulevard road signaling cross-overs done well can be a solution. This would accomplish the goal without totally stopping the traffic and the carrying capacity of the road remains intact. You must get traffic in step with pedestrians. The loop ramps to the freeway were designed to be free-flow loops – make them right-angle turns to reduce turning vehicle speeds. Small cost solutions and baby steps are the better start.

- Jim Shultz, MDOT, question: Do quarter-mile crossings make sense?
 - Stephen Dearing response: Maybe, but strategic placement is more important than just filling gaps.
- Pat Cawley, Traffic Improvement Association of Michigan: Go after the low-hanging fruit, on Wilshire there is opportunity for leading pedestrian interval crossings. Now, the right turn conflicts with the walk signal. There are many instances of long times to cross or waiting through two cycles. People will feel more comfortable with hot response systems (pedestrian call right away) that could be a simple solution that isn't overly expensive.
- Alan Kiriluk, Kirco/DDA: What is happening around the world? What have you seen at conferences? What are the new ideas? How do we make it more inviting?
 - Pat Cawley, Traffic Improvement Association of Michigan, response: The best tool is probably a hawk signal but pedestrian traffic has to meet the number requirements. Flashing devices and similar solutions take a whole culture change.
 - Dennis Kolar, RCOC, response: People don't obey them, they are largely ineffective.
 - Mayor Pro Tem Dave Henderson: Big Beaver was designed to be vehicle friendly so we need to make that culture change. We neglected the fact that people want to cross and walk. The slope to get under I-75 is too high, there is a bad fence, and lack of lighting. We have four miles of road, with "nodes" to Royal Oak, Birmingham, etc., if we make one node great then move to the next and connect them all we would have a next-level corridor. Our solution needs to include looking for sponsorship at the cross-walks (i.e. Granite City have a beer in theirs). But who will pay for all this?
 - Mark de la Vergne, Sam Schwartz Engineering, response: a lot of things can be done small-scale and we can test them in certain areas before we do it large-scale on the whole corridor. We have to see what works in Troy, some ideas might work in some places and not others. Picking nodes first is the logical solution because trial and error will occur.
 - I'll take an inventory of what's happening now and what we should do first and what is key cosmetic improvement.
 - Dick Carlisle, Carlisle/Wortman, response: On the short-term, maintenance can be a quick and cheap fix. Basic areas that need to stones/weeds/cracks/etc cleaned up will be identified. Right now it looks like we don't care so let's show we care by cleaning up what we have and then begin implementing improvements. We will take an inventory of stop bars to see where they are because right now there really isn't a methodology or data collection process for collecting pedestrian concentration and use (chicken or egg solution, do they use it because we build it or do we build it because they will use it).
- Mayor Dane Slater: There are some obvious nodes to me – in front of City Hall, all we try to do is make people go west-bound, east-bound but it is a long distance to go (Crooks). In front of Civic

Center Drive has to be an intersection with the new apartments and hospital coming in and will help many people get across the street. There is a tremendous amount of activity happening in the next year and this momentum could extend this node down to Granite City and the new hotel. We have to start somewhere and City Hall could be our experiment. Do it first in nodes, then connect the nodes.

- Stephen Dearing, OHM Engineering Advisors: To denote a pedestrian crossing there have to be white lines, but what you put in or in between the white can be whatever you want (the white is what you see at night). Everything also has to be accommodating to all user but there is flexibility. Signalization is more problematic because there are many moving parts in the problem. It has to be system-wide changes. Signals are not safety devices, not unusual for more crashes to happen due to signals, time and study must be understood before installation.
- Alan Kiriluk, Kirco/DDA: Are there round-about safety techniques that can be utilized?
 - Dennis Kolar, RCOC, response: Hawk signals are used at round-about, but again that requires a culture change and people are unfamiliar with them.
- Mark Miller, City of Troy: What is realistic in implementing new signals?
 - Dennis Kolar, RCOC, response: Look at the hotspots first and then study the weaknesses, signals can't go everywhere.
 - Kelli Baird, Altair, response: We support taking a logical approach, if City Hall is more active then go there first and then go where the demand is second. Do what makes sense. We are also in the Automation Alley, what potential do we have to take the funds captured from this entity to support pedestrian-friendly initiatives?
- Don Edmunds, Planning Commission Chair: As a senior citizen I hope something is done SOON. Walk strips or raised strips near Altair could be an easy solution. We need to see something quick.
- Tom Perring, Altair: Mark de la Vergne, what are the short-term?
 - A trolley is not short-term, so see where you can integrate art with the existing landscape. Find edge parking and talk to those owners for temporary installations. Maintenance keep up is also key. Programming is a fast turnaround solution, which is how you can engage and become grass-roots. Also right now there is not a point person/organization that owns this and can put the pieces together so it has to be the community.
- Jim Schultz, MDOT: How do you make the sidewalk more attractive? Shrubs? How do you shield the parking lots or make a welcoming environment without spending a lot of money. Snow and maintenance seem like easy options within our means. What about the residents? How do you get the residents (i.e. Somerset apartments) to engage? We have neglected this fact so far and need to think of them and give them a reason to be there.
 - Kelli: Weed killing is overlooked, even Starbucks has an ugly front as well and near and around City Hall. These are high volume areas that need to be a priority.
- Mayor Dane Slater: I didn't realize how ugly the walk was until I did it, and frankly it's embarrassing. What does our payment to the DDA maintenance go to?
 - Kurt Bovensiepe, City of Troy, response: Neither mowing or DDA funds address sidewalks and the right-of-way and is something we need to look at with future contracts or assigning to in-house.

Big Beaver Road Pedestrian Symposium

- Mayor Dane Slater, response: Maintenance is a quick fix that we need to discuss at next DDA and expand the requirements of their responsibility.
- Councilwoman Ellen Hodorek: There is a statement to be made here, so we can't forget to think long-term. A trolley should be our future thinking. The node idea is a great start, but don't forget about bridges or crazy thinking or dreaming big. We never know what the next new idea could be.
- Councilman Wade Fleming: Short-term solutions should be a stepping stone to the long-term dreaming. Someone has to be the champion and that will be achieved with public-private partnership.